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Synopsis

Study of South Asia has been well known for the experimentation of nation-building and nationalism. This area has experienced two partitions and these events affected the entire region in its magnitude. Its ideology and different strategy in administration compel the inhabitants to look at the region afresh. Indeed, the conception of South Asia as a geo-strategic and political region of modern nation-states draws from several historical events. The geo-political lineage of South Asia went back to the decolonisation. Actually, decolonisation led to the reshaping of the World into several demarcating setting. Language, culture and politics etc can form oneness of a group of a people regardless of one's legal citizenship and status. Scientists see national identity in psychological terms as 'an awareness of difference', a feeling of recognition of 'we' and 'they'. National symbol, language, colour, nation's history, culture, music etc express one's national identity.

However, dominant idea of nationalism is derived from Europe and it is reappropriated and applied in the colonial countries. When these countries break the yoke of colonisation, they faced the challenge of multiple identities and as a result, numerous new nation states emerged out of the single colonial state. These new nation states required the construction and legitimisation for special identity. Therefore, decolonisation witnessed the creation of new nation states. The creation was not easy one and the task was rather arduous to construct and consolidate a fresh identity on the basis of new cultural symbols.

Indian nation is founded upon the concept of homogeneity. But different phenomena challenging the state, addressing both poverty and lack of democracy has been the important issue of the postcolonial period. Different events have made the ideal of nation-construction bare. As a result, many of the critics complain that Indian-nation state is yet in nascent stage. Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shyam Selvadurai are South Asian novelists. They are conscious about the history that swept over the entire region and they try to raise the different problems of the citizens in South Asia. In several works they are obsessed with nation building, nation, nationalism etc at the backdrop of post independence period. They are concerned with different communities and their crisis in specific period. Amitav |Ghosh is conscious about the Bengali refugees, Rohinton Mistry are concerned with Parsi community whereas Shyam Selvadurai deals with Sinhalese and Tamil community.

Partition remains the defining moment for people who are engaged in reinterpreting cultural and national identities in contemporary South Asia. The immediate effect of the partition is large scale exodus or exchange of people between borders. Upper and middle class Hindus moved from East Bengal to Calcutta and other major sub-urban areas in the initial period of exodus. The family of Amitav Ghosh hailed from East Bengal before partition but his fiction is infused with 'refugee' problem. Indeed, Ghosh saw destructive violence of post-modernist era and it compelled him to formulate Nation in new garb, drawing heavily upon the socio-political reality of present day times. In his works he is obsessed with post-independence community formation. His writing is obsessed with borders and boundaries which tend to divide the nation-state. His fictional work tries to grapple with the historical situation and understands the people the people burdened with alienation, disintegration due to the division of land. He was inspired to write *The Shadow Lines* from the ghastly anti-sikh communal riots that followed in macabre assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1982. From this incident Ghosh conceived that there were deep fissures within the body polity of the Indian nation. The narrator refers to multiple accidents which pinpoint the shattering idea of India as homogeneous community.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is set in this specific period and specific location of Sundarbans. In this region he has seen the opportunity of assemblage of different cultural, national, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities. So, he has chosen a special historical moment and tried to find the 'Nation' that was formed out of these fundamental communities. It presents Morichjhapi massacre---a result of Foucauldian governmentality of contemporary Left wing regime and narrates a particular moment of socio-political transition pregnant with future possibilities of 'nation' making.

The Parsis as minority forms a small community and faces identity crisis and problem. In Rohinton Mistry's works we see this community to curve a space of their own struggling against the hegemonic forces of the dominant community. His work *Such a Long Journey* often reflects the problems, aspirations, ambitions, superstition, prejudices, ingrained ideas of the Pasri community and at the same time portrays social history of contemporary India embedding it with Parsi history side by side. Thus, various facets of this community come out and thereby, Mistry has portrayed a fragmentary part of Indian nation. Again his characters do not emerge from creamy layer of that community; they are overtaken or fallen victims to history. Mistry has narrated the voice of the muted minority through which he tells the history of the Parsi community who get embezzled within the larger frame of Great Indian community. In *Family Matters* too Mistry expresses his apprehension about the disintegration of the community. This novel was written at the backdrop of burgeoning of right wing communalist politics and pervasive corruption. The demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 by Hindu militants was followed by outbursts of violence which took tolls of hundreds of lives. Shiv Sena defending itself as the 'defender of Hindus' won public support at the background of anti-Muslim sentiment. Mistry depicts the pitiful state of the nation through portraying cityscape of Bombay and by telescoping the breakdown of values within family.

The Sinhala-Tamil conflict is a serious issue and it has generated multiple texts. All those texts help in understanding the idea of Nationalism and nation from the point of view of ethnicity. Ethnicity is a modern subject of study. In this age of globalisation and internationalisation, the ethnicity has not found the demise. Rather, one can find the explosions

of ethnic revivals across the globe. South Asia is not exception to this. Ethnic conflict and national movements are seen to flourish throughout its territory. It is a regulative force behind the social and political facade of this area. In modern period, ethnic community and identity formation often commingle with conflict though there is no necessary connection between ethnicity and conflict. The basis of ethnic conflict is established when two or more ethnic communities continue to exist within a territorial state. As politics pervades every sphere of the modern period, political impact is left on ethnic community and identity. However, there are other forms and source of ethnic conflict such as economic inequalities and transformation of occupation due to linguistic, cultural, religious differences and distinction in the distribution of political rewards within polytechnic states. Sri Lanka has been a place caught by the storm of ethnic strife for years. Various writers have tried to present this historical issue in their fictional form. Shyam Selvadurai is renowned novelist of Sri Lanka, now living in Canada. In his work he has efficiently written down different perspective of nationalism and idea of nation that he experienced as a fellow Tamil. Among his works, *Funny Boy* and *The Hungry Ghosts* depict the turbulent history of modern Sri Lanka which has been wrecked down by violence for over thirty years. *Funny Boy* is set amidst Tamil-Sinhalese conflict and the first novel written by Shyam Selvadurai. It is written in six parts dealing with the growth of a boy who explores at once the fuming atmosphere of conflict leading to the 1983 riot. So, this novel gradually defines historical moment which caught the simmering tensions between Sinhala and Tamil ethnic cultures. There is certain relation between factual details of this conflict and the representation of it in fiction. A new holocaust was underway and Selvadurai epitomizes the private struggle of his characters against the background of catastrophic circumstances of nation. This section brings to light the emergent nationalism in a crisis period. He exposes the hidden tension of co-existence and challenges the regime of official state policy. Nationalism becomes the religion of the community, of an ethnicity. They fashion and shape the micro nation in perennial mode.

In *The Hungry Ghosts* Shyam Selvadurai has dwelt on extensively about ethnic nation, nationalism and its detrimental effect that has been raging Sri Lanka. After the relentless riot of 1983, many Tamils had to depart homeland and congregated to Toronto which became the mecca for the Srilankan Tamils who left this ravaged island. In Srilanka LTTE had been waging war for an independent Tamil state popularly known as Tamil Eelam, constructed with the North and East of Sri Lanka as the Tamils believed that they were being denied the equal rights, privilege, status etc. The characters left the country after the brutal quarter-century war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Sri Lankan government left thousands dead, dislocated and dispossessed. Selvadurai has managerially expressed the open wounds of Sri Lankan civil war. The characters being uprooted from home country cannot cope up with the new world situation and the inter-state war. Therefore, the events within native country shattered them. But it is not easy to adopt the ethos of the host country and adapt oneself to the foreign culture because adaptation cannot be taken to the centre. So identity crisis gets born.

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